



Springfield-Greene County
Health Department
Helping people live longer, healthier, happier lives

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 9-14-05*****

From the Office of the Director of Health

Community-Associated MRSA Strikes Healthy People in the Ozarks

Health care providers express concern over an increase in bacterial attacks on athletes, healthy adults and children across southwest Missouri. Community-associated methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or CA-MRSA, is emerging outside hospitals in individuals with no known risk factors.

"In the past we didn't see such resistant organisms in the community," says infectious disease specialist Wolfe Gerecht, M.D. "I'm very concerned because the standard oral antibiotics physicians use to treat skin and lung infections do not work on this organism. It requires the use of very expensive or intravenous antibiotics to ensure success in treatment."

CA-MRSA is caused by bacteria that enter the skin through a small cut or scratch. It appears like a painful pimple-like eruption or boil on the skin, and is often mistaken for a spider bite.

While CA-MRSA usually causes skin disease, especially in the area we serve, some patients may need to be hospitalized due to complications.

"Recovery is possible, but it is important to seek medical attention early," adds Gerecht. "Your health care provider may incise or drain the boil and may prescribe antibiotics. If you have a cut, scrape or bump that becomes more painful, red or swollen, contact your health care provider immediately."

To protect yourself from CA-MRSA, use the following precautions:

- Cover all wounds.
- Practice good hygiene such as hand washing and bathing regularly.
- Don't share items such as towels with other people.
- When playing competitive sports or working out at a fitness facility, clean shared equipment after use.

For more information, contact:

Cora Scott, Director of Media Relations, St. John's Health System 417-820-2426

Donna Barton, Media Relations Coordinator, CoxHealth 417-269-4113

Linda DeGraffenreid, Epidemiology Specialist, Springfield-Greene County Health Dept. 417-864-1678

###